

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – U.S. Rep. Mike Coffman (R-Colorado) will visit the U.S. – Mexico border early next week to see first-hand the problems of inadequate border security, drug smuggling, and illegal immigration. Coffman will meet with Border Patrol agents and is scheduled for a tour of new border fencing near Douglas, Arizona.

"This is no longer an issue limited to stopping the tide of illegal immigrants but an issue fundamental to the national security of this country," Coffman said. "Mexico is in a struggle with powerful drug cartels and that violence is now spilling across the border and impacting Americans in towns far from the border."

In addition to observing the border security problem up close in Cochise County, Arizona, Coffman will also confer with top law enforcement leaders in Phoenix, a city that has been hard hit by cartel-related kidnappings and violence. He will meet with Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio, county attorney Andrew Thomas, and the head of the U.S. Marshalls Service in Arizona, David Gonzales.

Recent press reports have noted the drastic increase in border violence due to the increased presence of gangs and drug cartels. Mexico has had a difficult time containing drug violence and rooting out corruption inside Mexican law enforcement agencies.

Terrorist groups are now collaborating with the lucrative drug trade to finance their global operations and have the potential to smuggle weapons and terrorist group members into the United States.

"I have also had briefings that the Lebanon-based terrorist organization, Hezbollah, has infiltrated the drug trade to raise money to help fund their operations," Coffman concluded. "I have a concern about their ability to use the same channels that the drug cartels are using to cross into our country."